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ABSTRACT

Of the two processes involved in initiating a values awareness lesson (structuring and focus setting), focus setting is described as the one involving more planning and deliberation. Three criteria useful in selecting a focus-setting question are: (1) Is the topic within the knowledge of the students? (2) Is the question relevant to the students? and (3) Is the question one that invites students to use their values? Other factors to be considered include whether state law or school district policy allow a particular question to be discussed, whether the question would be highly traumatic or frustrating to one or more of the students, and whether the teacher has strong feelings about the question. Ways in which a focus-setting question may be presented to students include the use of transparencies, unfinished stories, scenarios, short stories, group activities, films, television programs, and current events. (MJB)

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Dalstra Values Awareness Teaching Strategy
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SELECTING AND PRESENTING THE FOCUS

FOR A VALUES AWARENESS LESSON

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SELECTING AND PRESENTING THE FOCUS FOR A VALUES AWARENESS LESSON

Two events are necessary to initiate a values awareness lesson; informing students how they'll be working and letting them know what they'll be working on — what topic they'll be discussing. Informing students how they'll be working is referred to as Structuring teaching behavior. To formulate a Structuring teaching behavior, the teacher has only to give some thought to what students are to do during the lesson, how they are to be organized, and what they can expect from their teacher.

Letting the students know what they'll be discussing, using the Focus Setting teaching behavior, on the other hand, takes much more planning and deliberation. In this case, the teacher must be able to identify a specific topic, phrase the discussion question, and in many instances, create the setting for the question that makes it "real" for the students. The purposes of this paper are to provide criteria useful in formulating or selecting a Focus Setting question and to suggest some general alternatives useful in setting the stage for these questions.

THREE CRITERIA USEFUL IN SELECTING THE FOCUS SETTING QUESTION

A question that specifies the topic for a values awareness discussion is referred to as a Focus Setting behavior. Either the teacher or the students can formulate a Focus Setting behavior. While there are different questions a teacher or the students can pose in an attempt to stimulate a values awareness lesson, not just any question will do the job. The task for the teacher is to either formulate his or her own questions or select those questions from curriculum materials or those posed by the students that offer the greatest chances for a successful lesson. But how does the teacher recognize those questions? A careful analysis of focus setting questions that produce lively and productive values awareness lessons has led to the identification of the following three criteria useful in formulating or selecting them.

THREE CRITERIA

- Criterion #1: *Is the topic of the focus setting question within the knowledge of the students?*

The extent of students' knowledge of a discussion topic is one factor that affects their participation in a values awareness lesson. Consider the discussion topic of fad diets, for example. Students who don't know what a fad diet is will probably have little to contribute to the discussion other than to ask questions about what a fad diet is. Their participation will probably be minimal at best. Students who have some knowledge of fad diets, because they may have heard about them on TV, heard them discussed at home, or who have done some reading about them will, no doubt, have more to contribute. The chances are that they will participate more than their uninformed counterparts in the classroom. Of course the greatest participation may be anticipated from these students who have extensive knowledge about the subject. Such knowledge may have resulted from studying pros and cons about fad diets, talking to others who have used such diets, using a fad diet themselves, and so on.

The way one's knowledge about a topic affects their participation in a discussion about it is obvious. The more students know about the focus setting question, the greater are the chances for the success of the lesson.

- Criterion #2: *Is the focus setting question relevant to the students?*

Another factor that affects students' participation in a values awareness lesson is what we call the personal relevance of the particular discussion topic. In assessing personal relevance, the teacher makes a judgment abou' how meaningful the topic will be to the lives, interests, or concerns of his or her students. Consider the following topics, for example, in relation to a group of third grade students: (1) the behavior of adults at a recent City Council hearing (2) the

behavior of teenagers at a recent rock concert, and (3) the behavior of third graders on the playground during recess. It seems obvious that the first topic will probably be irrelevant to most third graders. Because many third graders look forward to the time when they will attend a rock concern, the second topic may be somewhat relevant to them. It's clear that the third topic, their own behavior on the playground during recess, will probably be highly relevant for them.

The way the personal relevance of a particular discussion topic influences students' participation in a values awareness lesson is clear. The more the focus setting question relates to the lives, interests, or concerns of the students the more relevant it is. The more relevant it is, the greater the liklihood the lesson will be successful.

- Criterion #3: *Is the focus setting question one that invites students to use their values?*

A major goal of values awareness lessons is to help students become aware of their values. The focus setting question must, therefore, invite students to use their values. The ways people most frequently use their values is to make value judgments or propose a desired course of action to be implemented. Having done so, it's possible to "read back" from the value judgment or course of action to the underlying values. As a result, focus setting questions most suitable for values awareness lessons are those that call for students to make value judgments or report a course of action.

One stem usually effective in formulating a focus setting question that invites students to make value judgments is,

How do you feel about ....?

The stem usually effective in formulating a focus setting question that invites students to report a course of action is,

What should be done about....?

It should be pointed out that focus setting questions which invite students to report a value judgment or course of action also stimulated the occurrence of other student behaviors such as reporting data, reporting predictions, generating data, reporting values, and so on in support of these value judgments or proposed courses of action. It's the natural way people respond to these kinds of focus setting questions. On the other hand, focus setting questions that begin with stems such as, *What happened....*, *What do you think will happen...?* usually are not suitable for values awareness. They do stimulate a discussion by inviting students to report data or make predictions. However, it's difficult to facilitate the students' awareness of their values if they aren't using their values by reporting courses of action or making value judgments as a legitimate part of the discussion.

Some Other Factors to be Considered in Selecting A Focus Setting Question

In addition to formulating or selecting topics for values awareness lessons in the light of the three criteria presented, there are some other factors which should also be taken into account. One such factor is state laws related to what teachers can and can't do in the classroom.

Many states have laws that prohibit teachers from asking students questions about their home life, about what their parents do, or about how their parents feel about something. Many local school districts have policies in support of these kinds of state laws. Other kinds of district policies may preclude the discussion of specific topics such as pre-marital sex, and so on by teachers and students in the classroom and in turn is another factor to be considered.

Another factor that should influence the teacher's selection of topics or questions for values awareness lessons is whether or not the topic is related to as highly frustrating or traumatic experience of one or more of the students in the classroom. For example, while to identify a topic such as divorce may be highly relevant to a group of students because they are products of divorced parents, the trauma they may have experienced may be reason enough for the teacher to avoid that topic. On the other hand, with a capable teacher this topic may be ideal for those students.

Finally, whatever topic is identified for a values awareness lesson, it must be one that the teacher can live with; one that he or she will be able to maintain an "open" climate rather than one for which the teacher has very strong feelings. In the latter case the teacher's strong feelings may come through to the students regardless of what he or she says. Thus, the teacher's own values also enter into the decision about what topics are appropriate for values awareness lessons in his or her classroom.

In reviewing these four additional factors to be considered in selecting a question for a values awareness lesson it may seem at first glance that there will be few questions suitable for the classroom that are not in conflict with one or more of these factors. Actually, nothing could be further from the truth. By wording focus setting questions thoughtfully, many potential conflicts with state laws such-as asking students about their parents or home life—can easily be avoided. For example, in most instances where the question is posed to a group rather than directed to an individual student it's ok to ask the students how they feel about an issue or topic rather than asking them how their parents feel about it. It's ok to ask students what they think might or should be done about a given dilemma such as drugs in the community rather than asking them about what their parents have done, are doing, or should be doing. Avoiding conflict with district policies is also relatively easily dealt with. If the school district has a policy prohibiting classroom discussion of pre-marital sex, don't discuss that topic. We've seen several effective values-related educational programs, teaching strategies, or classroom

activities prohibited in some school districts because of a teacher's thoughtless or stubborn judgment in the selection of topics. As a result, they "lost the baby with the bath water". The place to fight existing school district policies is at a district board meeting, not in the classroom. Taking school district policies into consideration when selecting or formulating a focus setting question merely means knowing what school district policies are, and finding ways to work legitimately within them.

The other two factors present a bit more of a challenge for the teacher. In one instance, the teacher will find it necessary to keep informed — as best he or she can — about the lives of the students. In doing so, the teacher will be better able to avoid selecting topics or issues for discussions that may be overly disturbing or embarrassing to some of the students in the group. As for the final factor, the teacher's own values, it's necessary for the teacher to keep tuned into his or her own feelings, anxieties, and concerns in order to avoid subverting the objectives of the values awareness lesson. Otherwise, instead of providing an opportunity for the students to gain some insight into their own values, the lesson becomes a platform for the teacher to espouse his or her biases, attitudes, judgments, or values. And that's just not a values awareness lesson!

SETTING THE STAGE FOR THE FOCUS SETTING QUESTION

Having selected or formulated a focus setting question in view of the criteria and factors identified, a related issue of concern to the teacher is, *In what way will the focus setting question be presented to the students?* Obviously, there are many different ways the question may be given to the students. Ways to present a focus setting question may range from just stating the question for the students' response, to involving them in various kinds of group activities. But, how does the teacher decide whether to initiate the lesson by the use of the focus setting question alone or to couple the statement of the question with some kind of presentation, activity, or discussion designed to set the stage for the question?

The teacher's purpose in using some means to set the stage for a focus setting question is to get the students geared up for, tuned in to, or otherwise motivated to respond to the discussion. For example, if the students' classroom to homeroom was vandalized and many of the students' work was destroyed or some of their property stolen, there would probably be no need for the teacher to set the stage for a question such as, *How do you feel about people who destroy school property?* The vandals would have set the stage for the discussion by their action. Similarly, some spontaneous event on the school playground or campus such as a fight, disturbance, or visitation by the Tooth Fairy can set the stage for related questions.

In these kinds of situations, the teacher doesn't have to set the stage for the focus setting question because it is automatically taken care of. In most other situations, however, some action by the teacher to set the stage is required in order to:

- Help the students relate their present knowledge to the specific focus setting question and/or

- Build the knowledge related to the topic necessary if the focus setting question is to have meaning for the students and/or

- Build the momentum for the values awareness lesson by developing the students' understanding of the topic before the focus setting question is posed and/or

- Help the students see the relevance of the focus setting question to their lives, interests, or concerns.

It's apparent that productive focus setting questions have their meaning for people in some kind of context. Setting the stage for the question is taking action to establish that context for the students. In some instances, natural events in the student's lives set the stage for the

discussion. With most focus setting questions appropriate for health education, however, the teacher must take some action to set the stage for the discussion question.

USING OVERHEAD TRANSPARENCIES OR STUDY PRINTS TO SET THE STAGE

Undoubtedly, there are many ways a teacher can set the stage for a focus setting question. In the video tape of a values awareness lesson Gus Dalis, the teacher, set the stage for the focus setting question, *What should Gerald do?* by inviting his students to discuss what they felt was happening in a transparency shown on an overhead projector. When he felt that the students understood the situation depicted and that some momentum for the discussion had been achieved, he wrote the question on the transparency. The stage was set, the focus setting question presented, and the values awareness lesson was initiated.

The stage for this focus setting question could also have been set in other ways as well. A study print, unfinished story, case study, film or filmstrip might have been used. Obviously, to set the stage for this particular question, the theme of any of these materials would have to deal with a boy or girl who gets a venereal disease. In the sample of Ms. Pollack's lesson, she adapted a transparency designed for another purpose to set the stage for a values awareness lesson focus setting question. In addition to the School Health Education Study materials she drew on, there are many other educational materials that may be used as they are or adapted in some way to set the stage for values awareness focus setting questions.

USING UNFINISHED STORIES TO SET THE STAGE

The National Education Association has available two volumes entitled, "Unfinished Stories." Written several years ago, these stories should be adapted to the present day language of students to make them suitable. Unfinished stories take the students through some situation to that moment in which the major characters have a decision or choice to make. While the NEA

Unfinished Stories are not intended to deal specifically with health issues, many do relate to health since they center on coping with emotional and social problems familiar to most students.

An Unfinished Story: What Should Gail Do?

(Adapted with permission from "UNFINISHED STORIES FOR USE IN THE CLASSROOM". National Education Association, 1966.)

Gail sat alone, chewing on a dry peanut butter sandwich. It would have gone down more easily and tasted better if she'd had an orange to go with it, but according to her mother, oranges cost too much money for her family. Gail watched a group of girls by the window. They were laughing at something the boys were doing on the playground. She would have given anything to be with them, but the other girls never included her. You were "in" or you were "out", Gail decided miserably. She was obviously "out".

To be popular in school, you had to wear the kinds of clothes the other girls were wearing. Right now the style at school was paisley "maxies". Gail not only didn't have a paisley print "maxie", she didn't have a print dress of any kind. All she had was one or two shabby skirts, a few blouses, and an old gray sweater her aunt had thrown away. Just that morning at breakfast, Gail had tried to explain to her mother how important it was to her to dress like the other girls. "You don't have to tell me how it feels not to belong," Mother had said. "I never belonged to anything in my whole life. But there is no use crying over what you haven't got. You'll have to be liked because you are a good friend and cheerful."

Gail didn't think she had much to be cheerful about. She wasn't pretty and she couldn't think of clever things to say. She didn't have any particular talent to do something special, like play a musical instrument or sing. She was sure that even if she acted cheerful every minute, she still wouldn't become one of the group of girls.

An Unfinished Story: What Should Gail do? — Cont'd.

The girls were nice enough but they didn't let her in on their secrets or trade clothes with her or invite her home. Some of the other girls in the class were "out" too, but this was because they wanted it that way. Some of them were honor students who liked to spend their time studying. Gail didn't think she was smart enough to be "in" with them and she didn't think they were much fun anyway. She wanted to be part of the popular group of girls.

Focus Setting Question: *What should Gail do?*

USING SCENARIOS TO SET THE STAGE

Similar to Unfinished Stories, scenarios describe a "make believe" situation or event that the students are involved in. Unfinished Stories usually end with the focus setting question, *What should _____ do?* Scenarios, on the other hand, frequently conclude with the question, *What would you do in this situation?* While most frequently scenarios are read by the teacher or the students, some may be adopted to a script format in which students role play the various roles depicted in the scenario. These kinds of scenarios might conclude with the focus setting question, *What would you do next in that situation?* Published in 1972 by the National Highway Traffic Administration and the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, "Alcohol and Alcohol Safety," a curriculum manual for the upper elementary, junior high and senior high levels includes a number of scenarios useful to the teacher of health education.

A Scenario: The Big League Game

(Adapted from ALCOHOL AND ALCOHOL SAFETY, UPPER ELEMENTARY, National Highway Traffic Administration & the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, 1972)

You are an elementary school age boy. While playing Little League baseball, you have become friendly with Richard Smith, who is another outfielder on your team. He's really a great kid and a fantastic ball player. Sometimes he tells stories about some of the wild drinking parties his parents have had. You know from your other friends at school that Richard's father is an alcoholic, but you don't see why that should have anything to do with your friendship with Richard. Actually, it makes Richard seem a little more interesting to you, especially because your father is a very quiet man. You wonder what it's like having a father who frequently gets drunk and beats up his wife.

Yesterday during the game, Richard told you his father was going to take him to a big league baseball game. Richard said it was ok with his father if you would like to go along with them. You don't usually get a chance to go to a big league game, so this was a big chance for you, and secretly you're very curious to meet Richard's father too.

It's dinner time now at your home, and you are seated at the dinner table with your Mom and Dad. You wonder if you should just go with Richard without telling your folks or ask them. Since your folks know Richard's dad is an alcoholic, you are concerned that they might not let you go to the ball game with him.

Focus Setting Question: *What would you do?*

USING SHORT STORIES, LITERATURE OR MAGAZINE ARTICLES TO SET THE STAGE

Literature, short stories, and magazine articles can also be useful in setting the stage for a focus setting question. In these cases, however, productive focus setting questions most frequently are those that invite the students to make value judgments about what one or more of the characters did or said. As a result, questions such as, *How do you feel about what _____ did?* are usually used.

A Short Story: The Miracle Drug

(Adapted from the "HEINZ STORY" used by L. Kohlberg, Professor, Harvard Graduate School of Education.)

A woman was suffering from an extremely rare, painful disease. According to the most qualified doctors, there was a 95% chance that in three months she would become nearly completely paralyzed and would suffer a very painful bedridden existence thereafter. There was one medicine that offered a 50% chance of a cure.

The only medicine presently available was developed by a physician who spent several years in the research and development of the substance. Furthermore, he financed the development with his own money. For a complete treatment, the medicine cost the doctor $100. However, he charged each patient $2,000 (twenty times his cost in time and ingredients) of which he donated $1,600 to an orphan's home.

The woman's concerned husband found himself without the $2,000 he needed to buy the treatment. After selling their household goods and automobile, $800 was all he could raise. His efforts to acquire loans or welfare aid proved fruitless. The husband pleaded with the physician to give him the medicine for the $800 plus the promise to pay the remaining $1,200 on installment payments. The physician rejected the offer.

A Short Story: The Miracle Drug — Cont'd.

He said, *I developed this substance after years of financial sacrifice and because there are never more than two or three cases of this disease a year, I must demand the full amount in cash.*

The husband felt desperate. His wife needed the medicine now, but there was no way he knew of to get it for her except to steal it. He turned to his minister for advice. The minister told him that stealing was against the ten commandments and that his wife's suffering was God's will and he shouldn't interfere with what God had willed. His best friend refused to advise him because he didn't want to get involved. His wife pleaded with him to steal, even murder if necessary to get the medicine.

One night, the husband broke into the doctor's office, stole the medicine his wife needed, and in a fit of anger, destroyed the remaining medicine and the formula.

Focus Setting Question: *Who was the most reprehensible; the woman, the husband, the physician, the minister, the friend?*

Literature

Following are a few examples of books that may be used to set the stage for a health-related values awareness lesson.

Daly, Maureen — **The Seventeenth Summer** (Pocket Books, 1968.) This a story about the first love of a 17-year old girl. On page 163, her older boyfriend takes her to a German restaurant where she has a coke. Her boyfriend suggests she try a stein of beer. She gives in "for fun," even though she feels it is not "ladylike". After her second beer, she becomes very talkative and laughs a lot, then becomes sleepy. Later on she feels that she had a wonderful evening. Mature reading.

Woody, Regina J.,	**One Day At A Time** (Westminster, 1968). This story is about a 13-year old girl whose mother is an alcoholic. Her mother eventually drinks herself unconscious and is taken to a hospital. Later the mother has a birthday party for the girl at which the mother gets drunk, to the embarrassment of the girl. Mature reading.
Sherburne, Zoa,	**Jennifer** (Morrow, 1959). A story about a girl whose mother is an alcoholic. She learns to cope with this type of family situation. Mature reading. (Hardbound only).
Miller, Warren,	**The Cool World** (Crest). A novel about a gang of ghetto blacks in New York City and their lives. They drink to get courage to fight other neighborhood gangs. Pp. 148-155. Uses ghetto dialect. Mature reading.
Hinton, S.E.,	**The Outsiders** (Dell, 1969). A novel written by a teenage girl about two warring juvenile gangs. Pp. 49-51. A scene is described in which one gang is drunk and starts a fight with the other gang. Average reading.
Twain, Mark,	**The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn** - (bantam). A story about a young boy's adventures on the Mississippi River in the 1880's. His father is an alcoholic. In one scene, his father gets the D.T.'s Pp. 13, 19-34. Mature reading.

USING GROUP ACTIVITIES TO SET THE STAGE

It was mentioned earlier that one criteria useful in selecting or formulating a focus setting question is relevance. While various group activities such as these outlined or described by Simon et., al.[1] and Pfeiffer and Jones[2] may be used to set the stage for a specific discussion question, other activities are useful to enable the teacher to select the question most relevant to a group of students.

[1]Simon, Howe, and Kirschenbaum, **Values Clarification, A Handbook of Strategies for Teachers**, Hart Publishing Co., New York, 1972.

[2]Pfeiffer and Jones, **A Handbook of Structured Experiences for Human Relations Training, Vol. I, Vol. II, Vol. III, Vol. IV. University Associates, LaJolla, Ca. 1974.**

Group Activity: Forced Choice

(Adapted for upper elementary students from the activity demonstrated by Sidney Simon, Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development National Conference, St. Louis, 1969.)

For this activity, the teacher has prepared a list of phrases on a transparency that completes the stem, *How strongly do you feel about . . .?* A key word is underlined in each phrase. The students are given a sheet of paper that has been divided into the same number of boxes as the number of phrases to be read. The boxes are numbered in sequence.

In structuring for the activity, the teacher informs the students that a certain number of questions are to be read aloud, one at a time. Each time a question is read, they are to decide how strongly they feel about it and write the key word in the appropriate box. Be sure the students are aware that they are ranking strong feelings vs. weak feelings not strong positive feelings vs. strong negative feelings. Box number one represents something they feel very strong about, number two next, and so on. The last box will represent something they don't care about very much. In other words, the students will be ranking the items they are highly concerned about toward one end of the scale and those they care little about at the other end.

When they've finished, they will have one key word in each box. The questions are read aloud, with the key word underlined on the transparency.

How strongly do you feel about:[3]

1. **Telling** on a friend who has done something really wrong

2. Kids who **shoplift**

3. Kids who **cheat** to win a game

4. Kids who fool around with **drugs**

5. Having **casseroles** for dinner

6. Sharing a **bedroom** with your brother or sister

7. Kids who eat a lot of **junk food**

8. People who **smoke** cigarettes in restaurants

After all the questions are read, the students are given time to make any shifts they want to.

Next the students are organized into groups of three or more. Each group is invited to arrive at a consensus of the first three items. They are given from five to ten minutes to decide. Each of the groups then writes the key word of their #1, #2, and #3 rated questions horizontally on a 2" wide strip of transparency material.

[3]This particular list of topics was developed for upper elementary students by Ann Stebin, Oneonta School, South Pasadena Unified School District, 1974.

#1 Drugs #2 Telling #3 Cheat

The strips from each group are then placed on an overhead projector to allow the class to see and discuss the rankings made by all of the groups.

When each group's ranking of the first three topics has been recorded on the transparency shown on the overhead, and discussed in the total group, two things have been accomplished. The teacher has information about which topics are of greatest concern or relevance to the students. Furthermore, the period of discussion in the small groups serves to get the students thinking about the topics, sharing their ideas, and listening to the ideas of others. Thus, this activity enables the teacher both to select a question relevant to the students and to get them talking and thinking about it as a way of setting the stage for the values awareness lesson to follow. The teacher then selects one of the more frequently rated top choices and poses it as a focus setting question. For example in one class drugs came up as the #1 item in 8 out of the 12 groups. Other groups had rated it as #2. So the teacher used that as the focus setting question for a Values Awareness lesson.

Focus Setting Question: *What should be done about kids who fool around with drugs?*

In some cases the values awareness lesson may follow the Forced Choice activity or the actual discussion may be initiated on the next day.

USING FILMS OR TELEVISION PROGRAMS TO SET THE STAGE

For years teachers have followed the use of a film or television program in the classroom with a discussion of what students saw or heard, the key points made, or what they got out of it. Used in this way, the teacher's purpose in showing the film or telecast was to introduce or present some information or begin to develop a new concept for the students. The discussion serves to highlight the specific information or concepts the students should learn and there are obviously other purposes teachers have in using films and television programs in the classroom.

Films and television programs can also be used to set the stage for a values awareness lesson. In this case, however, rather than centering a discussion after the viewing on what was depicted in the program, the emphasis is on getting the students to move beyond the production to consider what they think a given character should do or how they felt about a character(s) or situation. Since most films or television programs are intended to tell a story, focus setting questions beginning with the stem, *How do you feel about. . .*are usually most appropriate. Focus setting questions beginning with the stem, *What should _____ do?* may be used if the telecast or film is cut off at a critical point in the story. That is, the production is stopped just after a leading character is confronted with a decision to be made or an action to be taken.

More recently educational film and television producers have developed programs designed to set the stage for classroom discussion. Of particular interest to health educators are the program series entitled INSIDE/OUT and SELF INCORPORATED. Produced by the Agency For Instructional Television, Bloomington, Indiana, the programs center on an array of mental health issues related to the lives of 8-10 year olds and 11-13 year old children

respectively. Programs such as these that deal with "heavy" value loaded subjects provide an ideal stimulus for a value awareness lesson.

INSIDE/OUT: I Dare You

(Portions of "Inside/Out, A Guide For Teachers", page 62 reprinted with the permission of the Agency For Instructional Television, formerly National Instructional Television, Bloomington, Indiana.)

Clarissa, a new girl in the neighborhood, wants to join the "gang." To be accepted as a member, she must carry out a potentially dangerous dare. The gang is also shaken by the potential danger and debates whether the dare is necessary and how hard it should be.

In a series of flashbacks each child recounts his particular dare. Yes, Clarissa must accept the dare to join the gang; her trial will come later in the day.

Torn between a desire for social acceptance and a concern for her safety, Clarissa fantasizes many of the possible consequences of taking the dare and argues with herself about whether membership in the group is worth the risk.

When the moment of decision arrives, she is urged on by the gang, who shout fiercely, "Go! Go! Go!" As the tension reaches its highest point the program ends. . . . What has Clarissa decided to do?

Focus Setting Question: *What should Clarissa do?* Or, *How do you feel about kids who try to make their friends take a dare?*

USING CURRENT EVENTS TO SET THE STAGE

Perhaps one of the best sources of the current topics of concern in the local community, city, state, nations or world is the newspaper. Some newspapers even present positions for and against current topics to stimulate the reader's thinking. While reading current events in elementary classes, health, civics, or social science classes is a common occurrence, it's probably fair to assume that in few instances are such newspaper articles used to set the stage for a values awareness lesson.

One shortcoming in using newspaper articles is that though related to health education, a specific article may not present a topic of interest to the students. And the best topics are those for which the students hold differing points of view or about which they hold strong feelings. One way to check out the student's interest in and reaction to an article is to use the "What Do You Think?" approach. In this case the teacher (or students) select two or more health related newspaper articles. Each article is taped to the center of a larger piece of chart paper with the heading, "What Do You Think?"

Over the period of one or more days the students are invited to write their responses to the article on the chart paper. They may be initialed if the students are willing to do so.

What Do You Think?

Please write your reactions here on this bulletin board. Add your name or initials to your comment.

LA TIMES, APRIL 30, 1976

Nursing Home Owner Convicted

The first trial of a criminal case filed by City Atty. Burt Pines' special nursing home unit ended Thursday with a conviction of Dora Friedlander, who was accused of allowing board and care patients to become infested with lice.

As owner-operator of Commonwealth Manor in Los Angeles, she was found guilty of five misdemeanor counts by Municipal Judge Dickran Tevrizian. Her sentencing is scheduled for May 27.

The conviction included three counts of willfully failing to provide assistance necessary for the daily activities of the nursing home residents.

Another count charged that patients' clothes and food trays were dirty and unsanitary. The final count alleged that the owner-operator allowed a patient to be in charge of the facility in her absence.

Disgusting!
RC

This is another example of the failure of state licensing boards to enforce rules and regulations.
Jude Wolfman

I'd never put my folks in a nursing home!
D.L.

How could anyone do something like that and live with themselves?
Pat N.

How could anyone be so inhuman?
Edith

That's the height of irresponsibility.
Jane.

SHE SOUNDS SICKER THAN THE PEOPLE SHE'S SUPPOSED TO BE TAKING CARE OF.
J.F.

It's time we all take a good look at the problem. It's a disgrace on the national level.
Shirley P.

Some people will do anything for money
BUS 21 23

Those newpaper articles that stimulate responses that represent very strong feelings or that represent divergent points of view usually offer good topics for a values awareness lesson. In addition to helping the teacher identify a topic of interest to the students the current events approach gets the students thinking and talking about the topic before the actual values awareness lesson is initiated.

Obviously the various techniques discussed in this paper are only illustrative of many different ways a teacher might set the stage for a values awareness lesson. Other ways might be to take a field trip, view a filmstrip, invite a speaker to talk to the students, stage a debate, and so on. Rather than identify one of these techniques as best, the most effective approach is to use a variety of ways to set the stage for a values awareness lesson over the course of the semester. It is important to note, however, that:

a film is only a film,
a picture is only a picture,
a story is only a story, and
an activity is only an activity.

Whether any of these techniques is to become a values awareness lesson depends on what the teacher does and doesn't do.